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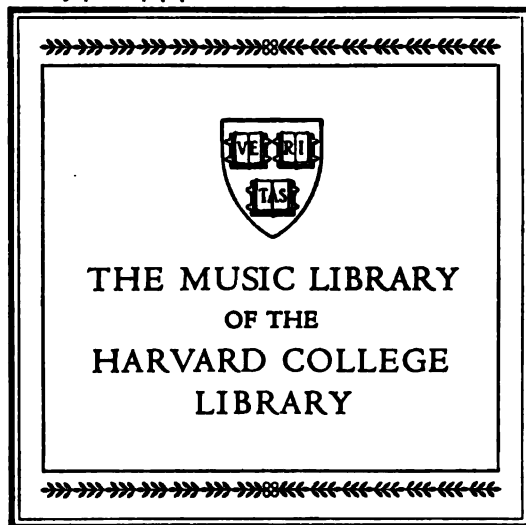
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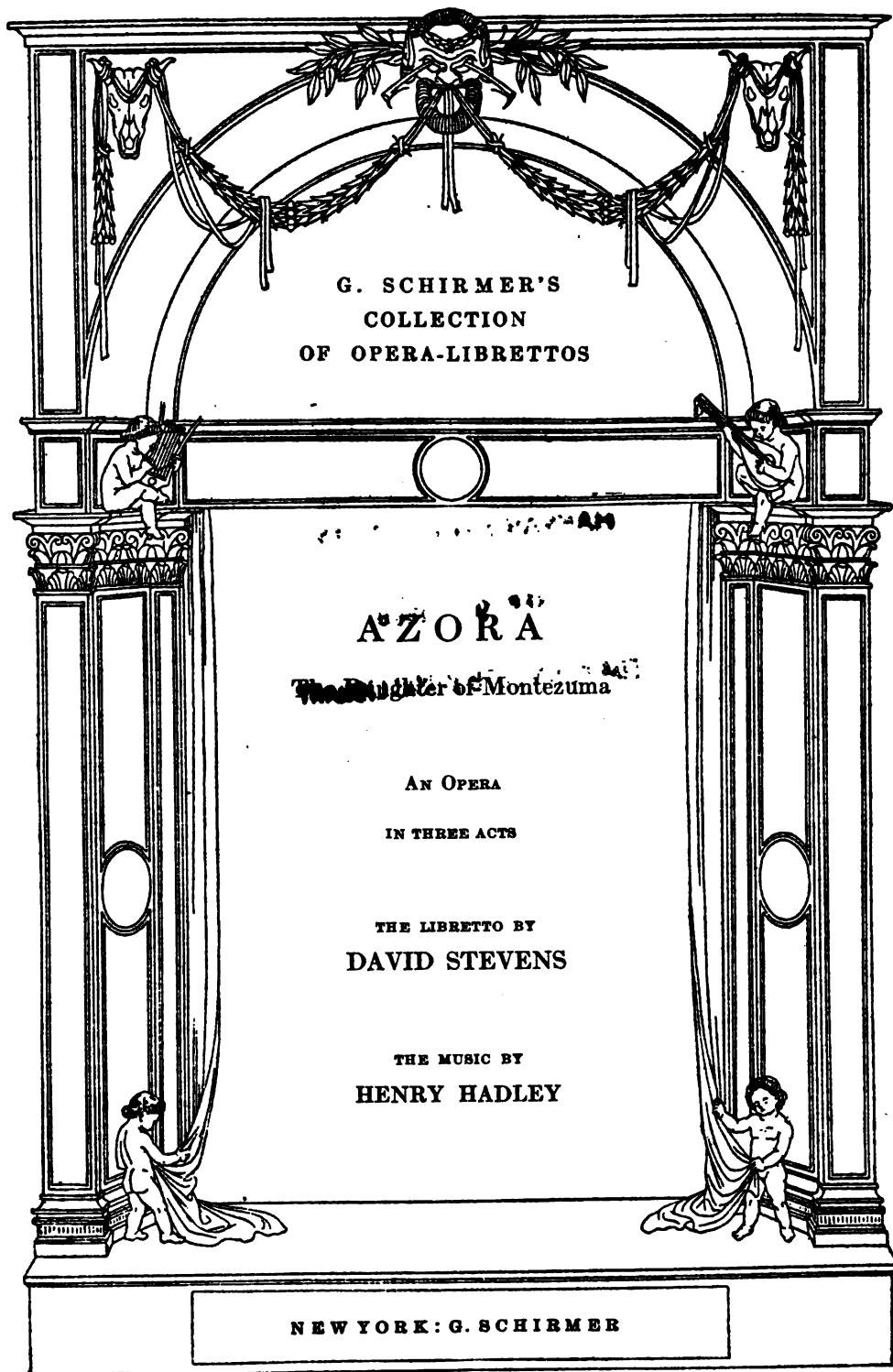
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G. SCHIRMER'S
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AZORÁ
~~The Daughter of Montezuma~~

AN OPERA
IN THREE ACTS

THE LIBRETTO BY
DAVID STEVENS

THE MUSIC BY
HENRY HADLEY

NEW YORK: G. SCHIRMER

Mus 571.777

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ARGUMENT

Xalca, a Prince of Tlascala, having been overcome in battle by *Montezuma*, is now residing in the latter's capital, a nominal prisoner of war. Actually he stands high in the Emperor's favor as a military leader; having submitted to *Montezuma's* rule, he has been given an important command.

The true reason for *Xalca's* devotion to *Montezuma's* interests lies in his love for *Azora*, the Emperor's daughter, who is destined by her father to be the wife of *Ramatzin*, titular chief of *Montezuma's* army. She, however, has given her love unreservedly to *Xalca* and regards *Ramatzin's* pretensions with disdain.

Owing to *Xalca's* anomalous position, his betrothal to *Azora* has been kept secret in the hope that an impending war with Tarascan will afford him an opportunity to so distinguish himself that his claim to equal standing with all will be recognized. *Ramatzin*, however, already resentful and angry at *Xalca's* success and popularity, is further enraged by the suspicion that *Azora* loves the Tlascalan, and all the energies of his bitter and unscrupulous nature are employed to defeat the hopes and aspirations of his rival.

Such is the situation when the action of the story begins.

It is the morning of the Feast of Totec, a ceremony requiring the sacrifice of many lives to the Sun-god, not only for his nourishment and subsistence, but to secure his favor in the impending war with Tarascan. Before the Feast begins, *Ramatzin* imparts his suspicions concerning *Azora* and *Xalca* to *Canek*, the fanatical High Priest of the Sun, who, knowing *Montezuma's* fierce pride in his race, foresees great trouble should *Azora* disregard her father's wishes with respect to *Ramatzin*. Accordingly, with the hope of dissuading *Xalca* from so dangerous a purpose, he charges him with aspiring to win the hand of the Emperor's daughter, an ambition beyond the hope of all save the noblest of her own race. *Xalca* admits his love for *Azora* and proudly refuses to surrender her.

Canek bids him beware of the consequences of his rashness, and withdraws, declaring that he will beseech the gods to intervene.

Azora then appears; in a passionate scene with *Xalca* their mutual love and devotion are reasserted.

The ceremonies of the Feast now begin with a general assembling of *Montezuma's* people, together with the Emperor and his sister, *Papantzin*, *Canek*, the Fire-Priests, *Dancing Girls* and *Soldiers*. The Sacrificial Victims are brought forth and all are about to proceed to the scene of the sacrifice, when *Montezuma*, observing that his daughter is not present, inquires the reason. *Papan* declares that she dissuaded *Azora* from presenting herself at the ceremony, believing the sacrificial rites to be wicked and unhallowed. Though *Montezuma* rebukes her for her apostacy, she relates a vision in which she beheld and heard a messenger from the true God, who proclaimed the coming of Christ's warriors and the victory of the Cross over blindness and superstition.

Montezuma is momentarily affected by her recital, but at that moment *Ramatzin* appears with the news that the approach of the Tarascan has been signalled from the mountains, and all is forgotten except the sacrifice to the Sun-god and immediate preparations for battle. *Xalca* is summoned and *Montezuma* entrusts him with the campaign against the enemy, promising him whatever he may demand if he return victorious.

Xalca eagerly undertakes the task, seeing therein his chance to win *Azora* unopposed. He departs forthwith, and, despite the earnest protests of *Papan*, the sacrificial ceremony proceeds.

A month has elapsed without news from *Xalca*; *Azora* seeks the Temple of Totec at sunset, and before the Sacred Fire prays for her lover's safe and victorious return.

Her devotions are interrupted by *Canek*, who tries to convince her that *Xalca* is defeated and dead. He further declares that *Montezuma*, angry at the apparent failure of *Xalca's* army, has determined on a second expedition under *Ramatzin's* command and that a swift runner has been despatched with a message to *Xalca* that if he be alive and beaten, he may remain away. *Canek*, however, interprets *Xalca's* silence as certain proof of his defeat and death, and leaves *Azora* all but hopeless.

Ramatzin now presents himself and urges his claim for her hand. He pleads humbly enough until it becomes obvious that *Azora* holds him in contempt, when his passion and anger lead him to affront her by his brutality. *Canek* appears in response to her cries and intervenes, although he pleads *Ramatzin's* cause until she dismisses them both peremptorily.

The hour of prayer having now arrived, *Montezuma* and his people enter the Temple and appeal to Totec for aid. *Ramatzin*, being commanded to lead his men to the scene of war, declares his readiness to depart, but demands that *Azora* be formally betrothed to him before he goes forth. The Emperor accedes without hesitation, and *Azora* is bidden to take the required vows. She refuses, and *Ramatzin* is driven by his fury to charge her with loving the Tlascalan. She proudly admits the charge and passionately asserts that she will wed no other. *Montezuma* sternly commands submission, and refuses to hear her final appeal; she defies him and reasserts her determination to wed *Xalca* if he be alive. *Montezuma*, enraged, swears that if *Xalca* appears before him with such bold pretensions, his fate shall be certain and swift death.

At this instant a distant trumpet is heard; the assembly stands in silent and breathless expectation, and the runner who was sent to seek out *Xalca's* army staggers up the steps of the Temple to announce the approach of *Xalca* victorious.

The trumpets sound again, and amid the triumphant songs and acclamations of his soldiers, *Xalca* appears in the entrance to the Temple. He proclaims victory and gives thanks to Totec, asking that on the morrow a sacrifice be made to the god.

Montezuma, speaking for the first time since *Xalca's* appearance, grimly assures him that a sacrifice shall be made. *Xalca*, now observing the ominous silence that pervades the assembly, but ignorant of its meaning, lays his sword at the Emperor's feet and claims his reward—the hand of *Azora*. *Montezuma*, in an outburst of fury, denounces him as an alien slave; and when *Azora* also demands that her father keep his plighted word, he declares that they shall indeed be made one—and by the hand of Death! The lovers are made prisoners and condemned to die at sunrise on the Altar of Sacrifice. The scene closes amid the jubilant shouts of *Xalca's* soldiers, without the Temple and unaware of their leader's fate.

In the hour preceding dawn on the following morning, *Azora* and *Papantzin* are seen in the Cavern of Sacrifice, the latter seeking to administer the consolations of faith in the true religion of Christ as revealed in her vision. *Azora* is not unresponsive, but is unable wholly to comprehend the significance of *Papan's* belief. *Canek* presently appears with news that *Montezuma* has determined to spare his daughter's life if she will accept *Ramatzin*. The latter is now admitted, together with *Xalca*, who, being acquainted with the Emperor's proposal, joins the others in begging her to yield, that he alone may pay the penalty of their ill-starred attachment. *Azora* refuses her father's clemency and declares her readiness for death with her lover.

Montezuma and his people now appear and *Azora's* determination is made known to him, whereupon he harshly directs *Canek* to perform his office. The prisoners are placed upon the Altar of Sacrifice. *Canek* prepares to despatch them by his own hand as soon as the shaft of sunlight admitted by a cleft in the wall shall rest upon the victims, this being regarded as a mystic signal from the Sun-god.

The moment is at hand; the High Priest, armed with the keen flint weapon of his office, has raised his arm to strike, when strange voices are heard singing the noble theme that has expressed *Papan's* faith in the true God. Awe-stricken silence falls upon the assembly; *Canek's* arm is involuntarily stayed; the voices draw nearer and the music grows more exalted. Suddenly there appears in the entrance the figure of *Cortés* mounted on a white charger and accompanied by his warriors and a band of Priests bearing white banners emblazoned with the symbol of the Christian religion and led by one holding aloft a great white Cross.

The people of *Montezuma* are filled with apprehension and dismay while, amid the chanting of the Spanish Priests, the bearer of the Cross makes his way unopposed to the Altar. As he reaches the prisoners, a shaft of sunlight falls directly upon the white Cross; *Canek's* nerveless hand releases his weapon and he falls senseless before the holy symbol. *Montezuma* and his people call frantically on their god Totec to protect them, but the overpowering manifestation of Christian faith is invincible and the scene closes with the triumphant strains of *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*.

A Z O R A

The Daughter of Montezuma

CHARACTERS

MONTEZUMA II,—Emperor of Mexico

XALCA,—A Tlascalan Prince

CANEK,—High Priest of the Sun

RAMATZIN,—General of Montezuma's Army

PIQUI-CHAQUI (Flea-footed),—a Runner

HERNANDO CORTÉS,—Conqueror of Mexico

A SPANISH PRIEST

AZORA,—Montezuma's Daughter

PAPANTZIN,—Sister to Montezuma

Soldiers of Cortés; Warriors of Montezuma's Army;
Spanish Priests; Priests of the Sacred Fire; Montezuma's People, Slaves, Dancing Girls and Sacrificial Victims.

SCENES

ACT I. A Courtyard before the House of the Eagles.

ACT II. Interior of the Temple of Totec.

ACT III. The Cavern of Sacrifice.

PERIOD: 1519

ACT THE FIRST

A Courtyard before the House of the Eagles

AZORA

The Daughter of Montezuma.

ACT I

SCENE: *A Courtyard before the House of the Eagles in Tenochtitlan, MONTEZUMA'S capital.*

The House of the Eagles is the armory of the regiment bearing the name of the Eagles, and is the scene of the military rites of worship of the sun. The façade of the house is seen on the left, and has a wide entrance, over which, on a colored hanging, is painted a great symbolic representation of the sun. It is daybreak and CANEK stands before the symbol of the sun with arms outstretched.

CANEK

Great Totec! Lord and Primal Source,
The Heart and Symbol of all being!
Thou by whom men live,
Great Chieftain, see and hear!
This day we nourish thee and feed thy vigor,
Lest the Darkness come!
Great Totec, see and hear!

(RAMATZIN enters)

RAMATZIN

O Priest of Totec, let your rites to-day
Prevail against the race of Tarascan,
Our ancient foe, and may the gods vouchsafe
Our army's sure success.

CANEK

The Wine of Sacrifice shall flow—fear not;
The Sun and all the lesser gods shall drink.
Our messengers, young men and maidens all,
By this arm sped, shall journey forth
And intercede to gain the favoring smile
Of Totec, god of Life and god of Death.

RAMATZIN

But hearken now, O Priest: If war ensue,

I go not to the scene, for Xalca,
Alien captive though he be,
Usurps my place in Montezuma's eye.

CANEK

A mighty soldier—Xalca!
Skilled in all the craft of war,
Who fights for Montezuma for love of battle.

RAMATZIN

Nay, Priest, can you be sure
That he forsakes his native race,
His liberty three times refused,
And tarries here for love of war?

CANEK

What other cause should move him, then?
He dare not plot a treason!

RAMATZIN

He plots no treason of the kind
That overturns the state; but hark!
If he should dare to lift his eyes
Unto the flow'r of Montezuma's heart,
Azora—what blacker treason could be named
In all the pitchy depths of black ingratitude!

CANEK

Ramatzin! she is your destined bride!

RAMATZIN (*going*)

My destined bride is she;
And let your priestly service be
To so propitiate the gods
That Destiny shall be now fulfilled!

(Exit RAMATZIN)

CANEK (*musings*)

Xalca a suitor for Azora's love?
He dare not try so bold a test
Of Montezuma's favor.

(XALCA enters)

XALCA

Hail, Canek, mighty Priest!
The Sun-god smiles while yet he waits
Your ordained ministrations.

CANEK

Peace, O Xalca! In this hour
A burden has been laid upon my heart,
And you that burden shall remove
Or make it heavier still.

XALCA

Speak, then, O Canek!

CANEK

A whisper comes to me but now
That Xalca dares the sacrilege
Of breathing, in the voice of love,
Azora's name!

XALCA

And if I do?

CANEK

Then, if you do,
Appeal to all the gods at once
To send you hence in battle,
Where you may meet an honored death,
Lest Montezuma, hearing this,
Despatch you as a slave!

XALCA (*haughtily*)

A slave? and wherefore slave?

(*proudly*)

A Prince am I in Tlascala,
And royal drops enrich my veins!
No eagle flies more free than I,
No voice has ever stayed my princely mood,
In Tlascala!

Then wherefore must I hide my heart
From her I love, fair Azora?

Know you, good Priest, she loves me.
Her starry eyes have searched my soul,
And mine have sounded hers.

No heights of joy remain untried,
Together we have climbed,
Till, standing on the crest, we gaze
Upon a world of Love!

(*The sound of girls' voices singing is heard
in the distance*)

GIRLS (*singing off-stage*)

Night has flown, with all her gems,
And day is come.
Fair the blushing face of morn!
Fairer still the face of Love!

CANEK

Azora comes! And, Xalca, hear me:
I hold you in my good esteem;
But one who loves you not,
In whose high place you stand,
By Montezuma's favor—

(*XALCA interrupts CANEK; the singing
ceases*)

XALCA

Ramatzin! Ay, he spends a jealous rage
In crying down my victories!

CANEK

He is no fool—and has the Emperor's ear.
Think you that he will idly stand,
Despoiled not only of his rank,
But of his bride as well?
Renounce this vain desire,
Ere Montezuma's wrath fall on you both!

XALCA

Renounce Azora?
Never, while her heart seeks mine
And throbs alone for me!

CANEK (*in anger*)

Then guard yourself—and her,
If so you can contrive!
And not alone from mortal wrath,
But from the fury of the gods, to whom
I, Canek, Priest of Sacred Totec, shall appeal!
(*Exit CANEK*)

XALCA (*disturbed*)

The sombre portents of the night,
The dreams that haunt my troubled sleep,
Now threaten me by day;
But Xalca, Prince of Tlascala,
Will never yield to threats his heart's desire!
Azora, fairest flower of her race, is mine!

(*The sound of singing voices again is
heard and AZORA now enters, borne on a*

litter by four slaves and attended by her maids, who are singing as they appear.)

MAIDENS

The morning lark sings on the height,
Oh, sing, Azora!

The waters laugh, the sunbeams dance,
Laugh, dance, sing, Azora!

Laugh, Azora, with the dawn.

The morning lark sings on the height,
Another happy day is come!

(At the centre of the Court, AZORA signals her slaves to stop. She alights from her litter and her attendants withdraw.

She turns to XALCA, who impatiently awaits her greeting. In her hand she carries a red rose.)

XALCA

Azora! The day has dawned indeed,
O Daughter of the Morning!

AZORA *(holding out the rose)*

Who brings you morning's sweetest rose,
That bloomed for you and me—the Rose of Love!

Whose tender petals bear the tears of Night.
(He takes her into his arms for a moment; enraptured, he takes the rose and kisses it.)

XALCA

Rose, blushing Rose! Sweet emblem of our love!
Its dewy fragrance breathes of you
And all your graces fair.
Ah, Rose—my Rose of Love!

AZORA

Oh, guard it well! Deep in its heart,
By perfumed petals hid,
The thrush has left a song,
A song of ecstasy, fraught with the spell
And mystery of Night!

XALCA

Tho' he sing with raptured voice,
He has no song like mine,
Nor any rose your fragrance—

(He takes her in his arms)

Flow'r of the World—my own!

AZORA *(with solemnity)*

Soul of my soul—in life and death!

(They embrace)

XALCA *(fervently)*

And if they seek to rob me—
To give you to another—
Steadfast you'll be?

AZORA

Ah, yes! Nor love nor fear
Shall win my heart from you, my own!

(Trumpets sound)

XALCA

The feast begins!
We part until the twilight hour;
Till then, farewell!
Hope's radiant smile
Lightens our pathway,
As shines the glorious sun on high!

AZORA

Hand in hand with smiling Hope,
Love comes blithely, with one enchanting
song!

(They turn toward the painted representation of the Sun-god)

BOTH

God of the Flaming Sun,
Potent in all,
Guard thou our love,
O mighty one!
(They turn away from the Sun-god)

XALCA

Now, on the greatest god of all
Our fortunes rest.

AZORA

Fear not, no evil shall befall
Where love abides.

XALCA

Duty may tear me from your side!

AZORA

Fear not, no evil shall befall!

XALCA

Warfare may claim the soldier's blade—

AZORA

Faithful my heart—forever!

(They embrace)

XALCA

Mine in life!

AZORA

In life—and death!

BOTH

Swift fly the hours, the weary hours,
Till dawns the glorious day
That makes you mine—my own!
Hope's radiant smile lightens our path,
Joy of my heart—my love, my life!

(They part and leave the Court by different ways.)

(Martial music is now heard and the Festal Procession appears. At its head are musicians performing on primitive instruments. A group of warriors follow; then CANEK, the FIRE-PRIESTS and slaves bearing censers with burning incense. Finally come MONTEZUMA, the PRINCESS PAPAN and others of the people. MONTEZUMA seats himself on a throne-like chair on the upper side of the entrance to the house of the Eagles. The DANCING GIRLS then appear and dance. These are in gala dress and carry slender sheaves of wheat and flowering maize. During the dance the people acclaim the greatness of the Emperor.)

THE PEOPLE

O King! Ruler of Kings, hail!
We share the pow'r of Montezuma's arm.
Hail, King! Mighty protector!
Father of high and low,
The strengthless and the strong.
Mighty defender! Ever our sword and shield,
Lord and Master, thou,
Whose voice we love and fear,
O, noble one! Protector, guide and hope

Of all thy race! O King,
Our hope, our guide to victory!

(Trumpets sound and the dancing ceases. CANEK takes a position before the painted sun.)

CANEK

The festal day of Totec, god of the sun!
The Day Auspicious for its timely advent,
Since war impends with Tarascan.
Bring forth the Sacrifice!

(The DANCING GIRLS resume their dance and the Sacrificial Victims appear. The girls carry staves decorated with feathers and the men bear shields covered with cotton tufts. All have bundles of eagle feathers in their hands, these adornments being symbolical in accordance with the rites of the Sun-god. The People, during the dance, address the Sun.)

THE PEOPLE

Guardian supernal! Lord of earth and sky!
Great Chief, celestial Master!
Take thou our Sacrifice, Lord of Life!
Totec! Hear our call! Hear us, O mighty Totec!

(During the dance, MONTEZUMA has surveyed the scene with satisfaction. He now rises.)

MONTEZUMA

'Tis good! Great Totec shall feast well to-day.
Lead, Priest, into the House of Eagles.

(There is a movement, which is stayed by MONTEZUMA, as he glances over the assemblage.)

Stay! My daughter's face I see not here;
Does she avoid the rites?

PAPAN *(agitated)*

I bade her stay away!
'Tis no meet sight for eyes like hers,
These impious ministrations!

MONTEZUMA *(angry)*

How now, my sister! You dare oppose
Your will to mine? And worse—
To risk the anger of our gods?

(PAPAN *shrinks*)

You well may hide your face!
Are you apostate to the faith
That guides us all from day to day—
From year to year?

(*He points to the sun*)

Do you renounce the face of him—
The Source of Life?
Do you disdain the light he sheds,
The warmth by which we live?
Do you deny the quickening power,
By which all seeds do germinate?
The strength all living things
Derive from his embrace?
To your knees, bold woman, before his shrine,
And beg that he may intercede,
Lest I forget the mother's hand that led us
both

And vow my sister—as a Sacrifice!

(PAPAN *has recovered her courage and
boldly faces* MONTEZUMA)

PAPAN

Hold, King! Ere these rites proceed,
I crave indulgence to relate a dream,
A dream that came in night's profoundest
silence;
And having heard, if still your kingly anger
Rest upon my head,
And you would make me food for gods,
Then be it so!

CANEK (*impatiently*)

This hour is not for idle tales
Of dreams and visions.
The god impatient waits—
We dare not stay!

MONTEZUMA

Peace, Canek, and we will hear the dream.
Speak, Papantzin.

PAPAN (*as though inspired*)

I dreamed that Death had claimed this
mortal frame,
And forth, along a dim, mysterious road,
My spirit fared.
In time a spacious valley met my sight,
Which no beginning had, nor end,

With hills on every side.

And through this fair and verdant space,
A mighty river ran athwart my path—
And still I knew no fear.

But ere I plunged into the flood,
I closed my eyes to gather strength;
And when I opened them again,
Behold! there stood upon the brink
A glorious Youth in garments white,
Whose visage like the heavens shone,
His lustrous wings repeating all the splendent
hues

The sun has e'er evoked
From all the precious gems of earth!
And on his gracious brow there stood the
figure of a Cross.

And as I gazed, he spake.

"Not yet, it is not time!" he cried,

"For thou hast yet to learn the love of God,
Ere thou shalt cross the River!"

And speaking thus, he turned me toward the
east,

And there upon the waters I beheld
Great ships that bore a host of men.

Aloft they held bright banners,
And lo! on every ensign shone

The figure of a cross! Then spake the
Youth:

"Behold! the Warriors of God are they,
The one Great God of all,
And bring His word unto thy race.

Therefore, return; relate what thou hast
heard,

And behold! this is the message thou shalt
bear:

'All gods but One forsake,

And cease thy rites unhallowed.

There is no other God save Him on High,
And Christ the only Sacrifice!"

(*During PAPAN's recital MONTEZUMA has
been seated listening with attention, which
grows more intense as she proceeds.
When she ends, he sits musing, while
CANEK, impatient at the interruption of
the ceremony, speaks with the authority of
his office.*)

CANEK

Enough! 'Tis mockery! and we shall know
The sun-god's wrath for this delay!

MONTEZUMA

Hold, Canek! My sister's words
Have struck some chord within my heart
That yields a note of vague response.
It troubles me.

PAPAN (*eagerly*)

O brother! Receive this omen
Ere it be too late!
Confess, this oft-repeated scene revolts you.
It cannot be the law that life for us
Means death—to these!

(*She indicates the victims*)MONTEZUMA (*hesitating*)

I know no other law.

CANEK (*imperiously*)

There is no other law!

MONTEZUMA

And yet—we may be wrong.
(*Drums are heard beating an alarm.
Trumpet blasts follow and sounds of
commotion are heard.*)

What means that sound?

(*The sound of drums and trumpets in-
creases in volume and RAMATZIN enters.*)

Ramatzin, the beat of drums we hear!

If you have news of war, declare it!

RAMATZIN

News have I, indeed, for battle is at hand.
Our signal-smoke proclaims the Tarascan!
The sleeping ogre wakes and grinds his
weapon!

CANEK

War! War! And Totec unappeased!
We mock the god that serves us.
The Sacrifice!

THE PEOPLE

The Sacrifice! The Sacrifice!

MONTEZUMA

Ay, the Sacrifice!

(*He recovers himself*)

What weak misgivings have possessed my
brain?

(PAPAN *tries to speak*)

Back, Papan! and dream no more!

AZORA (*enters in alarm*)

My father! What means this ferment?

MONTEZUMA (*exultantly*)

War, my child! Strife and battle!
Death and Victory!

CANEK (*aroused to frenzy*)

The Sacrifice!

THE PEOPLE

The Sacrifice! The Sacrifice!

MONTEZUMA

Hold! Ere the rites begin,
Let Xalca stand before me!

(*Trumpets sound and XALCA appears,
armed and prepared for battle.*)

O, Xalca, Chieftain,

Once more the voice that calls you hence has
spoken!

Again our banners are unfurled,

Once again flies the Eagle,

Our Eagle of the valiant crest,

Where sounds the brazen trumpet of War!

Again you lead our arms!

On you our hope reposes:

Guard it at the price of life itself!

XALCA

Your hopes are safe!

The arm of Xalca shall prevail,

By all the gods upheld!

MONTEZUMA

The flag of the foeman shall fly

Before the sword of Xalca,

Invincible in war!

Strike, then, a mighty blow,

And magnify the fame of Montezuma.

Go, trusted chieftain, with banners high;

On yonder field the laurel wreath
Of martial glory seize and wear!

SOLDIERS and PEOPLE
Wreaths of martial glory wear!

XALCA
I go at your bidding, master,
And shall return with a song triumphant,
Ay, though the foe be Kan himself!—
I fight for more than life!

SOLDIERS and PEOPLE
Strength to Xalca! Hail his name!
He shall sing a song triumphant!

MONTEZUMA
Strong your arm!

XALCA
My arm shall fail not!

MONTEZUMA
Beholden to your valor,
This warranty we give you:
Return victorious, and ask whate'er you will—
It shall be done!

SOLDIERS and PEOPLE
Return victorious, O Xalca!

XALCA
I hear, O master! Assured am I
Of Montezuma's honor and kingly faith.
(AZORA now approaches XALCA.)

AZORA
O wise and gallant warrior,
Whate'er befall the sword,
May fate grant a safe return!—
(She now speaks sotto voce to him alone.)
Farewell, O love, farewell!

XALCA (apart to her)
Fear not, Azora!
My life is guarded by a talisman.
Here in my bosom there lies a charm
To dull the keenest point. No harm may
reach me
While I possess the sacred amulet!

AZORA
O, hallowed charm! Our love-kissed talisman!
It is the rose of Love!
(The trumpets again sound.)

XALCA (to MONTEZUMA)
The signal sounds! And Xalca takes the field
Thrice-armed! My flaming sword
Shall never leave this hand
Until I lay it at your feet
Undimmed by failure or by broken faith!
Your promise, King, shall be another sword
Whereby the foe shall die, for on your pledge,
O mighty chief, is built my fairest dream.
Thrice-armed, indeed!
For here, upon this throbbing heart,
A secret token guards my life,
Unknown to all save one:
A charm endued with mystic power.—
The trumpets sound! Oh, glorious strain!
My sword in answer leaps
Impatient to the call!
With talons spread my Eagles fly!
Their mighty wings in furious wrath
Shall beat upon the foe,
And strife shall rage and shall not cease
Till o'er the field there shines the Star
Of Victory! Farewell!

CANEK (comes forward, impatient.)
The Sacrifice!

THE PEOPLE
The Sacrifice! The Sacrifice!
(The Procession resumes its way into the
House of the Eagles, the FIRE-PRIESTS
chanting. MONTEZUMA retains his seat
as the procession passes before him.
PAPAN hides her face. AZORA stands
watching for XALCA's departure, while
RAMATZIN watches her with sinister in-
tentness.)

FIRE-PRIESTS and PEOPLE
Earthly symbol of ever-living pow'r,
Take the sacrifice we bring,
Let our messengers approach.
Now, behold, to thy will we humbly bow,

And according to thy law
 Bring again the sacrifice.
 Hear, god of gods! Hear, O Totec, hear!
 Guardian supernal! Lord of earth and sky!
 Take thou our sacrifice!

(The PEOPLE and PRIESTS sing with increasing religious devotion)

Hear, O Totec! Lord of earth and sky!
 Mighty, ever-living power!
 Oh, take the sacrifice we bring!

Lord of death, receive our messengers!

Hear, god of gods! hear!

Hear, O Totec! hear!

Drink the blood-red wine of sacrifice!

Totec, lord of life and lord of death,

Hear us!

Hear, O lord of celestial fire!
 Earthly symbol of ever-living power!
(etc.)

Take our sacrifice!

(The procession has passed into the House of the Eagles, and all that follows is heard from within.—As the last of the procession disappears, MONTEZUMA rises, and with an imperious gesture indicates his desire that PAPAN should enter. She shudders and turns away. MONTEZUMA, with a glance at her and AZORA, who still stands by the gate, lifts his head scornfully and passes into the House. The sound of singing voices gradually diminishes.)

END OF ACT I

ACT THE SECOND
Interior of the Temple of Totec

ACT II

SCENE: *Interior of the Temple of Totec.*

The time is one month later than the events of the preceding act.

The upper side of the apartment is open, disclosing a view of distant plains and mountains.

The walls of the room are supported by heavy columns, severe in outline, in accordance with the Aztec style of architecture. The mural decorations are characteristic in design and of brilliant hues.

At the right is an image of the god Totec in stone, at the foot of which is an altar holding a receptacle for a burning fire of wood: The Sacred Fire, the extinction of which would mean disaster to Nahua.

On the ground, before the Fire-altar, is spread an Aztec rug of brilliant colors, upon which a slave maiden is kneeling facing the Fire, motionless. At her side is a bundle of fagots.

Standing by one of the great pillars is AZORA, her head supported by her extended arm, looking away into the distance.

The hour is sunset. As the scene proceeds the moon rises and floods the landscape with light.

AZORA

Now fades in the opal sky
All the brightness of hopeful day;
In this heart the sun has set,
Night and darkness come!

(AZORA goes to the slave and, touching her on the shoulder, indicates dismissal. The slave withdraws and AZORA kneels in her place before the fire.)

Burn, Fire! Eternal pledge of life!
Give me thy flame for my bosom.
Night has come and hope is dead!

(She rises and places a fagot on the

flames, which rise and subside.)

Burn, Sacred Flame, and warm my heart,
Dying, its fires unfed;
Oh, give me of thy vital breath,
Feed my craving soul,
That Faith may not die by Love unwed!
Oh, Flame ever-living, burn thou for him,
Oh, pledge of life, O Fire divine,
And guide his steps to me, That I may live.
Burn, thou Flame eternal! Shine
With steadfast beam, and light his home-ward path.

Oh, Flame ever-living, burn thou for him,
That honor and victory may crown
His valiant brow! Oh, burn, and send
Thy light afar to guide his steps to me!

(She again kneels before the fire.)

Guide, oh guide his steps to me!

(CANEK has entered silently, unseen by AZORA, and stands observing her as she finishes her appeal. He now comes forward.)

CANEK

You pray for Xalca—vain your prayer!
Another moon has come and still no tidings;
’Tis feared that Xalca is defeated.

AZROA *(still kneeling.)*

You speak a lie—begone! *(She rises)*

CANEK

And if defeated—dead!

AZORA

Go, evil tongue!

CANEK

If so the gods ordain—so shall it be!
Invoke no more the sacred Flame,
Nor yet the mighty arm of Totec!
To thus affront the gods is impious!

AZORA

Ah, leave me—I am distraught!

CANEK

Your father's anger fiercely burns
At Xalca's silence.

AZORA

He soon will speak!

CANEK

A messenger—Flea-footed Chaqui,
But now has been despatched
With Montezuma's word—

AZORA (*eagerly*)

The message, Priest?

CANEK

That Xalca, if he live,
Shall spare himself the pains of coming—
With ill news.

AZORA

Ah, Canek! he may have lost with honor!

CANEK

In Montezuma's eyes defeat is black disgrace;
Nor would this haughty Prince return with
failure.

By his own hand would he wipe out
The shameful stain. There is no hope—
He is dead! (*Exit*)

(AZORA drops to her knees before the Fire
and buries her face in her hands.

At the same moment the PRIESTS OF THE
FIRE are heard chanting as they approach.)

FIRE-PRIESTS (*unseen*)

Down from the heavenly spaces came the Fire,
Given by the Sun-god.

In its sovereign heart lies the fate of Nahua.
Guard the Fire!

(*The FIRE-PRIESTS enter. They are attended by a male slave, who bears on his shoulders a bundle of fagots, which he adds to those by the altar rug, retaining one in his hands. The PRIESTS continue singing, all facing the Fire behind the kneeling figure of AZORA, who remains motionless with her hands to her face.*)

FIRE-PRIESTS

Serve its ceaseless call for food,

Nourish and sustain its life;
Fear to let it call in vain—

Feed the Fire!

(*The slave places a fagot on the brazier. The flame rises and subsides. AZORA extends her arms upwards and again covers her face. The PRIESTS go out chanting.*)

FIRE-PRIESTS (*as they depart*)

Down from heavenly spaces came the Fire,
Given by the Sun-god.
In its sovereign heart lies the fate of Nahua:—
Guard the fire!

(*The FIRE-PRIESTS are gone; AZORA still kneels before the fire.*)

AZORA

Their words are mockery—should Xalca die!
Should Xalca die—if by the foeman's hand,
Or by his own, he perish,
Then let my tortured heart find peace in
death!

I would not live without him,
His soul to mine is wedded—
Ne'er to see his face,
Ne'er to hear his voice—
What joy could life on my breaking heart
bestow,
Should Xalca die?
Should Xalca die—if from my maiden hopes
The breath of life be taken,
Then die the universe—
Eternal darkness shroud the world—
And me!

(RAMATZIN appears; AZORA addresses him
haughtily)

What brings you here?

RAMATZIN

The power of Love!—Love brings me here!
Too long have you opposed me—
Too long have I endured!

AZORA

Ramatzin, hear:
Must we again renew a theme

That e'er must fruitless be
'Twixt me and you?

RAMATZIN (*harshly*)
Enough! The hour has come, and you *must*
hear!

AZORA
Must? And wherefore *must*?
Do you forget that I am mistress here?
Azora!

RAMATZIN
Yet hear me now you shall!

AZORA
This is insolence past believing!
Do you forget that I have thrice
Refused to hear your vows?
(RAMATZIN'S mood changes to tenderness.)

RAMATZIN
And still I love! Still am I yours—forever!
My world is you and only you!
Still do the sun, the moon
And thrice ten million stars
Shine but to guide me to the heart I crave!
Refuse a thousand times—
A thousand times declare you ne'er can love
me—
Still will I ask again!

AZORA
Then hear my answer, once for all, Ramatzin:
The thing you ask is vain.

RAMATZIN (*still pleading*)
Listen but a moment, Azora:
Here in this heart, engendered by your charm,
There dwells a mighty love
That ne'er shall yield to aught save Death!

AZORA (*angrily*)
Go! I'll hear no more.
To me your vows are hateful—
False in every accent.
Such is your love to me!

RAMATZIN
Words cannot move me—still do I love you.
(RAMATZIN'S insistence rouses AZORA to fury.)

AZORA
Hear, then, the rest: Were I a captive slave,
Condemned to perish by the scourge,
And life were granted at the price of wedding
you—
Think you that I would live?—No! better
death!
(RAMATZIN ignores these words and continues with increasing fervor.)

RAMATZIN
Azora, again I plead for love!
With suppliant heart I plead!
I feel your lofty scorn,
I hear your bitter words—
And falter not. Where love abides,
There Love is king, in glorious majesty,
And every man his slave. So I am slave—
Slave to his regent—you, my queen!

AZORA (*becoming wearied*)
Ah, spare me—'tis of no avail!

RAMATZIN
But why? My blood is princely:
No prouder place than mine in all the land,
Save but the King's.
My coffers burst with gold and jewels—
All these are yours,
My lofty rank, uncounted wealth and all
I bring to you.
(He tries to dazzle her by describing his treasure.)

Sapphires—blue as the cornflower
Waving in the grain!
Emeralds—reflecting a thousand springtimes!
Diamonds—like dewdrops ablaze with fire!
Opal and amethyst!
Pearls—whose lustre mocks belief!
Rubies—dyed in blood!
And all these gems are yours—
If you but speak the magic word
That makes you mine!

AZORA
Ah no! That word shall ne'er be spoken!
(RAMATZIN'S manner now becomes more imperious and threatening.)

RAMATZIN

Think once again before you blight
My heart's desire.
Think, before you wake my jealous wrath,
For I, Ramatzin, am no callow youth
To tamely yield if fate oppose me!
Reflect ere you defy me,
For by my soul you shall be mine!

(Again with tenderness and passion)

Oh, beloved! Make earth a paradise for me—
I love you!

(He seizes her hand and attempts to draw her into his embrace. She resists him.)

AZORA

Ah! Release my hand!
There is an intrigue to drive me to submission—

To thrust me into your arms! Release me—go!

(She snatches her hand from his grasp)

RAMATZIN *(with passionate anger)*

Go? Yes, I go! but with me take
The savor of the proud Azora's lips!

(He again tries to take her into his arms with the intention of carrying out his threat. A short struggle ensues till AZORA screams, when CANEK appears and hastily intervenes.)

CANEK

Hold! What means this tumult?
Speak, Ramatzin! Azora, speak!

AZORA *(with deep scorn)*

This man—this noble Prince—
Has dared to lay his odious touch on me—
Azora, daughter of a King!

RAMATZIN *(sullen and defiant)*

Is she not pledged to me?
Oh, Canek, you know full well
The promise given me by Montezuma.

AZORA

My hand is still my own to give,
And I will give it with my heart!

CANEK

Azora, it has been no secret—Ramatzin's love,
And he would make you wife; your father so
ordains it!

RAMATZIN

I offer her the world—
I offer jewels, gold and power,
That well befit her royal state,
Become her royal splendor!

AZORA

He offers me his world,
His world of jewels, gold and power—
He names them all.
In his vain eyes
They mean the sum of splendor!

CANEK

'T were best to heed;
His promise he can well perform.
The King commands,
Yours to obey!

AZORA *(wearily)*

Go, now; I bear too much.

(CANEK withdraws; RAMATZIN hesitates.)

A Princess bids you—go!

(Exit RAMATZIN in a sullen mood. AZORA drops to her knees before the Sacred Fire. A gong sounds the signal for prayer. The voices of the FIRE-PRIESTS are heard chanting. The Slave Girl reënters. AZORA rises and her place before the Fire is taken by the Girl.)

AZORA goes to open entrance of the Temple and gazes into the distance, then slowly withdraws as the FIRE-PRIESTS enter.)

FIRE-PRIESTS

Down from heavenly spaces came the Fire,
Given by the Sun-god.
In its sovereign heart lies the fate of Nahua:—
Guard the Fire!
(The PRIESTS have entered, attended as before by a Slave.)
Serve its ceaseless call for food,
Nourish and sustain its life;

ENSEMBLE

Fear to let it call in vain—

Feed the Fire!

(The Slave lays a fagot on the Fire, which blazes for an instant. The Girl extends her arms upwards and drops them.

As the PRIESTS chant, MONTEZUMA and his people, including soldiers of his guard, enter, preceded by CANEK in priestly robes, with his attendants. All do reverence to the god Totec.)

THE PEOPLE

Great Totec! Lord and Primal Source,
The Heart and Symbol of all being;
Thou by whom men live,
Great Chieftain, see and hear!

CANEK

This hour we worship and implore thy service
Lest the foe prevail.

THE PEOPLE

Great Totec! See and hear!

(The invocation concludes and MONTEZUMA addresses the assemblage.)

MONTEZUMA

A moon has waxed and waned
Since Xalca's haughty boast
That he would overcome the foe;
My patience ceases.

(He speaks to a Slave)

Go, slave, and send Ramatzin hither!

(The Slave runs off)

Henceforth our hope shall rest on him.

(RAMATZIN enters)

Ramatzin, we summon you to action!

RAMATZIN

The King's command is like a wingèd shaft
That finds its mark.

MONTEZUMA

Vain-glorious Xalca, with his Eagle host,
Went forth against the Tarascan.
Our ears are strained to hear
The sounds of Victory—but all is silence.
Our eyes have sought the signal-flame
On yonder hills in vain—the gods are wroth!

RAMATZIN

I stay for naught save Montezuma's word
To lead my banner on the field!

MONTEZUMA

Take then, our standard of the Heron's plume,
With all the force that fights beneath its ægis,
And go you hence to-night!

RAMATZIN

So be it, King! But first I claim fulfilment
Of your long-outstanding pledge
To make Azora mine.
Let our betrothal be proclaimed
And solemnized by all appointed rites—
Then send me forth!

MONTEZUMA

'Tis well; you ask no more than is your due.

RAMATZIN *(arrogantly)*

Azora must be mine!

(AZORA enters quickly)

AZORA

I heard my name—who speaks it here?

MONTEZUMA

Ramatzin—he whose promised wife you are.

AZORA

His promised wife! Whence came this promise?

MONTEZUMA *(sternly)*

From my lips! Your hand is pledged,
As well you know, to him, my royal choice.

AZORA *(passionately)*

And did you pledge my heart, as well?
'Twere better that you had,
If you would see me wife to him!

MONTEZUMA

Silence, Azora! I am your King!

AZORA *(undismayed)*

True, King you are; and I—
Am daughter of a King! I do not fear you:
Bind me—scourge me—do what you will;
No earthly power, nor yet the power of the gods

Can make me his. I do defy you!

*(She proceeds with scornful allusion to
RAMATZIN, who cannot conceal his fury.)*

Where is the princely pride he rates so high?
For know you, sovereign, within the hour
That man has heard my scorn of him
And all his vows!

RAMATZIN *(enraged)*

Her words are true—she scorns me!
And you, O, King, shall hear
For what she spurns a proud and noble name.

MONTEZUMA

That she defies me is outrage—
What more, then?

RAMATZIN

Forgetting all that honor means,
A faithless stranger, almost slave,
Whom you have raised to power exceeding
mine,
Has dared to filch the rarest pearl
From Montezuma's casket!

MONTEZUMA

By Totec's flame! You speak of Xalca!

RAMATZIN

Ay, Xalca! Let her deny the name
If she can.

AZORA *(proudly)*

And why deny it?
Does earth deny the kiss of dawn,
The clouds deny the mist?
Go, bring me news that thirsting fields
Deny the rippling stream;
Bring a rose that will deny
The drops of cooling dew—
Then shall you hear my lips
Deny the love of Xalca!

MONTEZUMA *(amazed)*

What treason do I hear!
Is this my child, whose tongue can utter words
That set my will at naught? Whose eyes
meet mine,
As though she knew not shame?

AZORA

There is no shame in holy love!

MONTEZUMA

No more! Prate not of love—
Obey my will! As for the guilty Xalca,
Pray that he is with his alien gods,
For if he live and dare to face me here,
With your name on his lips,
I vow before this sacred altar,
He shall die!

*(There is an instant of ominous silence;
then is heard the faint and distant note of
a trumpet. All are silent and breathless.
The trumpet note is repeated, sounding
nearer.)*

AZORA *(in a whisper)*

Xalca!

THE PEOPLE *(in a subdued voice)*

Xalca!

*(A cry is heard outside the Temple and
PIQUI-CHAQUI, the runner, staggers ex-
hausted up the steps.)*

PIQUI-CHAQUI

King and father—news!

MONTEZUMA

What news, slave?

PIQUI-CHAQUI

News so great that I, your slave,
Shall freedom gain by bearing it.
Xalca returns—his Eagle crest victorious!

*(Trumpets sound jubilantly, nearer than
before, and XALCA's soldiers are heard
acclaiming him.)*

XALCA'S MEN

Strength to Xalca! Hail his name!
He shall sing a song triumphant! Hail!
Hail his name!

*(Loud trumpet blasts are heard, now close
at hand. The light of torches can be seen
in the darkness before the entrance, together
with the heads and shoulders of a numerous
company of soldiers. Amid the jubilant*

music and the waving of torches, XALCA ascends the steps of the Temple and stands in the entrance with sword outstretched. Within the Temple all is silence.)

XALCA

Victory! Victory, O King!

XALCA'S MEN

Strength to Xalca! Hail his name!

XALCA

By Totec's strength have I prevailed—
Hail, Totec!

FIRE-PRIESTS

Hail, Totec! Hail!

XALCA (*addressing CANEK*)

When morning breaks, O Priest,
I ask a sacrifice to be prepared.

MONTEZUMA (*grimly*)

A sacrifice shall be prepared!

(XALCA has now begun to feel the sinister coldness of his greeting. He approaches MONTEZUMA and lays his sword at his feet.)

XALCA

My sword is yours, O, monarch,
Thrice yours, since thrice it has been drawn
Against invaders. And now—
I claim reward, O, King!

MONTEZUMA (*impassively*)

And what reward—Tlascalan?

(XALCA is disquieted by the significant appellation, but proceeds.)

XALCA

I elaim a prize divinely rare—
More beautiful than Beauty's queen—
Azora, brightest gem of earth!

(He turns to AZORA and, kneeling before her, places in her hand a withered rose.)

My love, my own! This rose, your talisman,
I bring to you, Azora mine!

(MONTEZUMA starts to his feet)

MONTEZUMA

You ask my daughter's hand—slave!

XALCA (*rising and facing MONTEZUMA*)
Slave!

MONTEZUMA

You are a slave.

Does not your life depend upon my will?
And it is forfeit.

(He calls to his soldiers)

Bind this traitorous slave!

AZORA

No! You dare not!

MONTEZUMA (*contemptuously*)

Ramatzin, take away your bride.

XALCA

His bride!

AZORA

His bride!

(She goes to her father and appeals to his love for her.)

Father, can you condemn me to a fate
Far worse than death?

Do pride and long-accustomed power
Annul the father's love—the daughter's claim?
Ask not this, sovereign father!

Oh, lay some lighter burden on your daughter's
heart.

Even ask my life; if some noble end I serve,
Then will I die, my brightest hope,
My heart's desire, my dream of love
Remembered—and resigned;

But ask not this!

(She weeps)

MONTEZUMA (*unmoved*)

I'll hear no more. No longer thwart my will.
Ramatzin claims his bride.

AZORA

Then let him take me if he can!
Bride am I to none but Xalca.

(XALCA starts forward. She stops him.)

No! the quarrel's mine!

(She surveys the assembly with defiance.)

I choose a Prince of Tlascala,
And on him I bestow my royal hand.

Is it for naught that in my veins
 There runs the blood of Montezuma?
 Is it for naught that you have bred in me
 A will as strong as yours—a heart as bold?

MONTEZUMA

And still you balk me? Ramatzin, end this!
*(RAMATZIN makes a movement toward
 AZORA. She checks him.)*

AZORA

Stand! I will end it!
(She draws a dagger from her girdle.)
 And if he dares to lay his hand on me,
 He dies by mine!

(She addresses MONTEZUMA)

Thrice have I declared
 That I will wed no man but Xalca.
 I keep my promises;
 You pledged your kingly faith,
 As fair exchange for victory,
 To grant whate'er he might demand.

Redeem your word—he claims Azora!

(She goes to XALCA)

MONTEZUMA *(beside himself)*

Then by the heavens above,
 Azora he shall have!

(To XALCA)

Take her: and when the morning breaks,
 The offering to Totec shall be
 A double sacrifice!

Ay, traitors! You shall be one—
 And Death shall make you so!

(He calls to his soldiers)

Bind them both!

*(Soldiers secure AZORA and XALCA and
 the curtain descends quickly, while XALCA'S
 MEN, unaware of their leader's fate, re-
 sume their acclamations outside the Tem-
 ple.)*

XALCA'S MEN

Strength to Xalca! Hail his name!
 Hail!

END OF ACT II

ACT THE THIRD
The Cavern of Sacrifice

ACT III

SCENE: *Interior of the Cavern of Sacrifice. To the right of the centre is a large entrance showing a glimpse of the lagoon that surrounds the city of Tenochtitlan, through which entrance, as the scene progresses, the morning light has admission.*

At the left, on a considerable elevation, is the Altar of Sacrifice, a large circular block of stone, carved in symbolic characters. Beside the steps of the Altar is a brazier wherein burns the Sacred Fire. Elevated behind the Altar is an image of the god Totec. High on the right wall of the Cavern is a small cleft in the rock, for a purpose which appears as the action proceeds. On the upper side of the Altar stands an immense drum, which when struck yields a deep, hollow and mysterious sound: the Death Drum.

At the mouth of the Cavern stand sentries. In front of the Altar a group of FIRE-PRIESTS are chanting. At intervals the ominous tone of the Death Drum is heard, sounded by one of the PRIESTS.

It is the hour immediately preceding sunrise and the place is now lighted by torches fixed in the walls of the Cavern. Later, as the sunlight begins to enter, these torches are extinguished.

When the curtain ascends, AZORA is seen seated on a stone bench at the right, and with her, PAPAN, who is bringing the consolations of her newly-awakened faith in the one merciful God. AZORA's bearing is proud and undismayed.

FIRE-PRIESTS

O ye powers that sternly guide
Our puny strength, we bring to-day
For sacrifice, so fair a life
That all the elements should join
To mark so strange a thing.

Rage, Wind! and Tempest, roar!
Heart of mountains, quake,
And cause the earth to reel!
Azora goes to meet the gods!

(The Death Drum sounds)

PAPAN

Death calls!
And still they pray to things of stone;
While somewhere in those purple heights,
There dwells a Being all Divine,
Of Grace and Love eternal!

AZORA (calmly)

You tell me so, Papan; but can I dream
Your dreams and see your visions?

PAPAN

My vision—that celestial voice,
Were sent by that Great Spirit.
There is no other God—I cannot doubt it.
Believe with me, and find peace!

AZORA

The voice I hear is Xalca's voice;
Let me but hear it to the end,
And they may do their worst—
Serenely will I die.

(The Death Drum sounds)

FIRE-PRIESTS

Death calls! Azora goes to meet the gods!
(There is a movement at the entrance of the Cavern, and CANEK enters with RAMATZIN, followed by two soldiers escorting XALCA bound between them. At a gesture from CANEK, they unbind the prisoner.)

CANEK

Azora, condemned to die,
I bring you hope of pardon.
The King relents; your lips may speak the
word
That sets you free.

AZORA

Unless that word set Xalca free,
I ne'er shall speak it.

XALCA (*imploringly*)

Azora, why must you die?
Your father grants you life,
E'en at the Altar's step,
If you will bow to his command
And wed Ramatzin.
I fear not death, but how shall I endure
To see the Flow'r of Earth
Dissevered from its stem for my poor sake!

(Following is a concerted passage, the substance only of the text being here given, without the elaboration required for the development of the music.)

AZORA

For Xalca would I live.
Think you that my heart's desire
I lightly can resign?
Are not life and cherished love
Fair to me?
For Xalca would I live.
But if he must die
To feed your bitter hate,
He shall not die alone!

XALCA

I fear not Death's embrace,
If you will live,
Though fair are life and love to me,
But though I must die to-day,
I would die alone.
Life is sweet, life is fair,
But death for my love is a welcome end.
Let me die alone!

PAPAN

Hear them, Azora! Though you resign
Your heart's desire, for life is fair—
'Tis better to live.
He must die—hear his devoted plea
To die alone!

RAMATZIN

We beg you to yield, Azora!

Am I so hateful still?

Is my image more grim than Death?
I have offered you gold and jewels rare,
Wealth, power and the strength of my
love.

Though you scorn me, still I bid you
Live, as I will live for you alone!

CANEK

We beg you to yield, Azora, and live.
Life is fair, life is sweet;
Death is a bitter thing.
Honor, duty and love bid you to live.
Fate calls your lover—alone!

(AZORA *denies their united plea and takes her stand by XALCA, who, though torn by grief, embraces her passionately.*

At this moment processional music announces the approach of MONTEZUMA, who enters, attended by his following, and is seated on a stone bench provided for him at the right. The People and Priests are possessed by the fanatic desire for sacrifice.)

PRIESTS and PEOPLE

The Sacrifice! The Sacrifice!
Earthly symbol of ever-living fire,
Take the Sacrifice we bring!

(CANEK, *by a gesture, commands silence, He addresses MONTEZUMA.*)

CANEK

Your gracious word of pardon is scorned, O
King,
By your unhappy daughter!

MONTEZUMA (*without emotion*)

Then naught remains but to perform your
office!

(CANEK *solemnly directs the removal of AZORA and XALCA to the Altar. This is done by the PRIESTS and CANEK then ascends the Altar, armed with the keen flint weapon of his office. With this he points to the cleft in the wall of the Cavern. The PRIESTS close in before the Altar and a Slave places incense on the Fire, from which a cloud of smoke rises.*)

CANEK

When through the crevice there appears
The sun's first lance of morning light
And rests upon these stubborn hearts,
Then shall the word of Montezuma be fulfilled,

And Totec shall receive his own!

(The Death Drum sounds)

FIRE-PRIESTS

Death calls! They go to meet the gods!

(PAPAN, greatly agitated, starts to her feet and appeals to MONTEZUMA.)

PAPAN

My brother! Shall I speak?

MONTEZUMA

Do you conceive that any word of yours
Can now avail?

PAPAN

I know not;
But still I see those glorious banners
Floating high! Still do I hear a voice divine
That bids me hope—though all be dark!

MONTEZUMA

'Tis vain, Papantzin.

(He speaks to AZORA)

One final word, rebellious child:
Abandon this unworthy slave—and live!

AZORA and XALCA

There is no death for us;
A moment's darkness—and we wake
In that shining land where winds are music
And the flowers are song,
And all forever true. Come!

(They are clasped in a last embrace. The ray of sunlight that has appeared through the cleft has been creeping toward them; CANEK's arm is poised ready to strike when the mystic sign is given. The victims have closed their eyes to receive the stroke. All is intense expectation; when distant voices are heard, singing strange music, the theme already suggested by PAPAN in expressing her faith in God. All listen in breathless silence.)

SPANIARDS *(unseen)*

Behold, we come with glorious banners floating high,

Proclaiming love divine, the love of Christ our Lord!

(The singing continues, the sound coming gradually nearer, till suddenly in the entrance of the Cavern, amid a burst of exalted music, appears the figure of CORTÉS, mounted on a white charger and followed by his soldiers and a band of PRIESTS carrying banners with the figure of a Cross and led by one bearing a great white Cross. The SPANISH PRIESTS enter chanting, and the bearer of the Cross, forcing his way through the crowd of stupefied FIRE-PRIESTS, mounts the Altar with his Holy Emblem held before him. As he reaches the prisoners, the shaft of sunlight from the cleft in the wall falls directly upon the Cross. CANEK's weapon falls from his nerveless hand and he drops to the ground senseless. The PEOPLE are terrified and call frantically on Totec to come to their aid. This is all enacted while the following passages are sung:)

SPANISH PRIESTS

To the God Eternal
Bow the head and bend the knee!

FIRE-PRIESTS and PEOPLE
(appealing to Totec)

Totec!

SPANISH PRIESTS

We proclaim His Kingdom
In the name of Christ, our Lord!

FIRE-PRIESTS and PEOPLE

Totec!

(AZORA and XALCA are amazed at the scene and at finding themselves free and unharmed)

AZORA

What means this wondrous sight—
This strange array?

XALCA

'Tis light in darkness!

PAPAN

'Tis light in darkness!

RAMATZIN

Whence come these strangers?

MONTEZUMA

What means this boldness?

(It has become apparent that PAPAN's vision is here realized.)

AZORA

Her vision! The banners ever-glorious,
Shining with the Sacred Cross!

PAPAN and XALCA

Those glorious banners,
Shining with the Sacred Cross!

MONTEZUMA

Her vision! The banners—
Shining with the Sacred Cross!

FIRE-PRIESTS and PEOPLE
(appealing to Totec)

God of the ever-living sun,
See and hear!

SPANISH PRIESTS

God eternal, Ruler of angels
And all the legion celestial,
The earth and the firmament,
Let thy Power prevail!

FIRE-PRIESTS

Ever-living Totec!

SPANISH PRIESTS

Here behold the Cross of Christ!

FIRE-PRIESTS

Hear and heed our prayer!

SPANISH PRIESTS

Where the Saviour died for all!

MONTEZUMA and RAMATZIN

(amazed at seeing AZORA and XALCA free)
They live!

PAPAN *(triumphantly)*

They live!

AZORA and XALCA

We live by Grace Divine!

[The remainder of the scene is concerted and the substance only of the text is here given, without attempting to follow the variations and repetitions required by the musical treatment.]

AZORA and XALCA

They come, bringing light
Where all was dark!

PAPAN

Behold, they come, with glorious
Banners floating high,
Proclaiming Love Divine,
The Love of Christ, our Lord,
The Son of God, Eternal King of all!

SPANIARDS

Behold, we come, with glorious
Banners floating high,
Proclaiming Love Divine,
The Love of Christ, our Lord,
The Son of God, Eternal King of all!

SPANISH PRIESTS

Hodie Christus natus est!

FIRE-PRIESTS and PEOPLE
(addressing Totec)

Where is thy power,
O god of life and death?
Where thy potent arm—
Thy all-compelling will?
Are all our prayers in vain,
O mighty Chief and Lord of all?
(AZORA and XALCA accept their deliverance as a manifestation of the power of PAPAN's God)

AZORA and XALCA

God is King of all!

ENSEMBLE

ENSEMBLE

AZORA, XALCA, PAPAN and SPANIARDS
 There is no other God
 Save Him on High, and Christ
 The only Sacrifice!

SPANISH PRIESTS
 Gloria in excelsis Deo!
 Alleluia! Alleluia!

FIRE-PRIESTS
(making a last frenzied appeal)
 Mighty Totec! Heed our call!

MONTEZUMA, RAMATZIN, FIRE-PRIESTS
 and THE PEOPLE
 Mighty Totec! Lord of all!

AZORA, XALCA, PAPAN and all THE
 SPANIARDS
 God on High is King of all!

(During the concluding passages, MONTEZUMA, RAMATZIN, the FIRE-PRIESTS and PEOPLE have been arrayed on the side of their ancient faith, vainly opposing the overwhelming power of God's law. MONTEZUMA is amazed and bewildered at the failure of his sovereignty and at Totec's impotence to serve his worshippers, while RAMATZIN sees his hopes and power destroyed by the unknown invaders. AZORA, XALCA and PAPAN, with the Spanish host, exalt the Love and Sacrifice of Christ and the supreme authority of God, King of all. As the scene reaches its climax, the Cross and banners are held aloft; amid the sound of jubilant chimes, the curtain descends.)

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Azora, the daughter of Montezuma; a

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